

1 **WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

2

3

1. A nestable crate for bottles, said crate comprising:

4

5 a floor portion having a floor top surface and a floor bottom surface, the
6 floor top surface including a plurality of bottle support areas for supporting bottles; and

6

7 a low-depth wall structure connected to the floor portion and forming a
8 containment area therewith, the wall structure having a peripherally extending upper
9 band portion having an interior surface with bottle contact portions and an exterior
10 surface, the low-depth wall structure further having a single-walled lower wall
11 construction comprising adjacent column members which extend between the upper
12 band and the floor portion, the wall structure including sidewalls and end walls, and
13 adjacent column members having concave facing surfaces extending inwardly into the
14 containment area,

14

15 wherein the bottle contact portions, bottle support areas, and the facing
16 surfaces define a plurality of bottle receiving pockets extending around the periphery
17 of the wall structure for maintaining bottles in a vertically upright manner.

17

18

19 2. The crate of claim 1, wherein the upper band member has an inner
20 surface with a plurality of nesting members aligned with corresponding column
21 members, such that an outer surface of the column members are configured to receive
22 the nesting members of a like crate when in a nesting orientation.

22

23

24 3. The crate of claim 2, wherein the nesting members have a double-
25 walled construction.

25

26

27 4. The crate of claim 1, wherein the bottle contact portion has a
28 concave shape.

28

29

30 5. The crate of claim 4, wherein the bottle contact portion has a
31 curvature corresponding to the facing surfaces.

31

6. The crate of claim 1, wherein the bottle contract portion has a single-walled construction.

7. The crate of claim 1 wherein the upper band member and each adjacent pair of columns define a window therebetween which is disposed below the upper band portion.

8. A low-depth nestable crate for holding bottles, said crate having a low-depth wall structure having sidewalls and end walls, said crate comprising:

a floor member having a floor top surface and a floor bottom surface;
a band extending around the periphery of the crate and spaced above the floor member for preventing the bottles from tipping, the band further having spaced-apart interior projections; and

a plurality of columns disposed along the sidewalls and end walls for connecting the band member and the floor member, the columns being spaced apart and having a nesting window disposed therebetween, the columns having an interior surface and an exterior surface, the columns projecting offset inwardly from the band such that adjacent pair of columns define a bottle receiving area for containing one of the bottles therein, the interior surface of each column having a pair of opposed surfaces meeting at a centrally disposed surface, the exterior surface of the column having a recess to matingly receive corresponding projections from a similar crate nested therebelow.

9. The crate of claim 8, wherein the interior surfaces of the columns have a cylindrically concave surface.

10. The crate of claim 9, wherein the cylindrically concave surface extends from a lower column edge to an upper column edge.

11. The crate of claim 8 wherein the band includes a plurality of upright concave inner surfaces, said concave inner surfaces arranged in an alternating manner with the columns and being positioned to correspond to the generally cylindrical bottles.

12. The crate of claim 11, wherein the cylindrically concave surface and its adjacent upright concave inner surface have a similar curvature radius.

13. The crate of claim 8 wherein at least a portion of the band has a single wall construction.

14. The crate of claim 8 further comprising upwardly recessed bottle top receiving areas on the floor bottom surface.

15. The crate of claim 8 wherein the crate has corner columns connecting the corner of the band to the floor member.

16. The crate of claim 8 wherein the interior projections of the band and adjacent columns have a common vertical centerline.

17. A low-depth nestable bottle crate comprising:
a floor member having a top surface and a bottom surface, the top surface having a plurality of bottle support areas for supporting an array of bottles in an upright manner;

a generally upright band member spaced apart from the floor member and extending around the periphery of the crate, the band member having an upper surface, a lower surface, an exterior surface, and an interior surface, the interior surface having a single walled bottle contact area corresponding to the bottle support areas of the floor member; and

a plurality of spaced-apart nesting columns connecting a periphery of the floor member with the lower surface of the band member, the columns including first and second opposed inner surfaces defining a corresponding vertical recess on the column outer surface, wherein the first inner surface of one of the plurality of columns, an adjacent second inner surface from an adjacent column, one of the bottle support areas and bottle contact areas define a bottle receiving pocket for supporting a bottle in an upright orientation.

1 18. The crate of claim 17 wherein the bottle contact areas are define
2 by arcuate surfaces on the band member interior surface which are arranged in an
3 alternating manner with the columns and are positioned to correspond to the generally
4 cylindrical bottles.

5
6 19. The crate of claim 17 wherein the first and second opposed inner
7 surfaces and their adjacent bottle contact areas have a similar radius of curvature.

8
9 20. The crate of claim 17 wherein the columns are arranged in an
10 alternating pattern with windows disposed therebetween and below the band member.

11
12 21. The crate of claim 17 wherein the band member includes side
13 wall portions and end wall portions, and wherein the side wall portions of the band
14 member include a handle opening formed therein.

15
16 22. The crate of claim 17 wherein the corner bottle support area is
17 configured such that more than half of the bottle circumference is contained within the
18 bottle support area.

19
20 23. A low-depth nestable bottle crate comprising:
21 a floor member having a top surface with a plurality of bottle support
22 areas for supporting an array of bottles thereon;
23 an upper wall member spaced apart from the floor member and
24 extending around the periphery of the crate, the upper wall member having an exterior
25 surface, and also having an interior surface with spaced apart inwardly extending
26 projection members, and bottle contact surfaces between the projection members; and
27 a lower wall portion disposed along a plane offset inwardly from the
28 projection members and having a plurality of support members for connecting a
29 periphery of the floor member with a lower surface of the upper wall member, the
30 support members aligned with the nesting projections of the upper wall member, the
31 support members including first and second opposed inner surfaces defining a
32 corresponding recess on the column outer surface for receiving the nesting projection

1 of a like crate when nested, the lower wall structure having a window disposed between
2 adjacent support members.

3
4 24. A nestable bottle crate comprising:
5 a floor member having a top surface with a plurality of bottle support areas for
6 supporting an array of bottles thereon;
7 an upper wall member spaced apart from the floor member and extending
8 around the periphery of the crate, the upper wall member having an upper edge, a lower
9 edge, an exterior surface, and also having an interior surface with spaced apart inwardly
10 extending nesting projections, and concave bottle contact surfaces between the nesting
11 projections; and
12 a lower wall structure inwardly offset from the upper wall member and having
13 a plurality of support members for connecting the floor member with a lower surface
14 of the band member, the support members vertically aligned with the nesting
15 projections of the upper wall member, the support members including first and second
16 opposed concave inner surfaces defining a corresponding recess on the column outer
17 surface for receiving the nesting projection of a like crate when nested, the lower wall
18 structure having a window disposed between adjacent support members.

19
20 25. A nestable crate assembly comprising:
21 (a) a first bottle crate comprising:
22 a floor having a top surface with a plurality of bottle support areas for
23 supporting an array of bottles thereon;
24 an upper wall member spaced apart from the floor member and extending
25 around the periphery of the crate, the upper wall member having an upper edge, a lower
26 edge, an exterior surface, and also having an interior surface with spaced apart
27 inwardly-extending portions, and bottle contact surfaces between the inwardly-
28 extending portions; and
29 a lower wall structure inwardly offset from the upper wall member and having
30 a plurality of support members for connecting a periphery of the floor member with the
31 upper wall member, the support members vertically aligned with the inwardly-
32 extending portions of the upper wall member, the support members including first and
33 second opposed inner surfaces defining a corresponding recess on the column outer

1 surface for receiving inwardly-extending portions of a like crate when nested, the lower
 2 wall structure having a window disposed between adjacent support members; and
 3 (b) a second bottle crate comprising:
 4 a plurality of generally vertical sidewalls defining a wall structure having an
 5 upper surface, outer surface and inner surface;
 6 a floor attached to the wall structure and defining a compartment therewith,
 7 wherein when the first bottle crate is nested within the compartment of the
 8 second bottle crate, the lower wall structure of the first bottle crate is disposed within
 9 the compartment of the second bottle crate such that the lower edge of the upper wall
 10 member of the first bottle crate rests upon the upper surfaces of the sidewalls of the
 11 second bottle crate, and wherein the exterior surface of the upper wall member of the
 12 first bottle crate is generally co-planar with the outer surface of the wall structure of the
 13 second bottle crate.